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ABSTRACT

In 1985, Knox College was chosen to participate in the Association of American Colleges/Mellon Transfer Grant Program, which sought to assist community college students in making the transition to the four-year college environment. Four local community colleges, Carl Sandburg College (CSC), Illinois Central College (ICC), Blackhawk East Community College (BECC), and William Rainey Harper College (WRHC), were invited to participate in the planning and implementation of activities to improve transfer opportunities. Discussions with college representatives focused on three broad categories: (1) articulation and advising, including issues such as course equivalency and student course planning; (2) orientation to assist in student adjustment from the two- to four-year college environment; and (3) recruitment, including issues related to the identification, counseling, and encouragement of potential transfer students. Initial efforts focused on the establishment of articulation agreements awarding 2 years worth of credit towards Knox College graduation to students transferring with an associate of arts or associate of science degree from one of the participating colleges. Other activities included the attempt to develop a course equivalency guide for BECC courses and a joint admission program for students enrolled in WRHC's QUEST program of accelerated liberal arts. (RO)

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INTERIM REPORT ON THE AAC-MELLON PROJECT FROM KNOX COLLEGE

JUNE, 1986

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JC 860 293

We at Knox College were delighted a year ago when we learned that the College had been chosen to participate in the AAC-Mellon Transfer Grant Program. Over the past fifteen years, we had taken some small steps on our own to establish a working relationship with Carl Sandburg College, the local community college. We had, for instance, a long standing articulation agreement awarding two years worth of credit towards Knox College graduation to any Carl Sandburg student transferring to Knox with an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree from Carl Sandburg. More recently, an endowed scholarship of $1000-$2000 was established several years ago for highly qualified Carl Sandburg students intending transfer to Knox (The Carl Sandburg-Lombard Scholarship).

Our first step in implementing the AAC-Mellon Grant was to chose a local program director. Dr. James Spencer, a former Illinois community college president, agreed to serve in this capacity. We then had preliminary conversations with administrators and faculty at Carl Sandburg to discuss means of fostering cooperation between Knox College and two-year institutions, and to aid community college students in making the transition to the four-year environment.

After these preliminary exploratory conversations with Carl Sandburg personnel, we decided to approach Illinois Central College, a large two-year institution in Peoria, to invite them to join with us and Carl Sandburg College in helping plan the direction of subsequent grant activities, and act as a second partner in implementing those activities.

In the Fall of 1985, a meeting was held at the Knox campus between selected faculty and administrators of the three cooperating schools to identify and define particular programs and activities to bring the schools closer together in a way that would benefit students at the community colleges by bringing transfer opportunities and means directly to them. Our central aim was to outline a model which could be used to develop successful two- to four-year transfer programs in other situations, with other institutions. To ensure that our deliberations would be ones that took cognizance of the needs of students, we included several students in our discussions who had come to Knox after taking A.A. degrees at Sandburg.

During this meeting we discussed a number of salient issues and proposals; among them:

1) The need for clarifying and increasing awareness of financial aid opportunities and procedures, especially in light of the relatively large additional costs of the four-year institutions as compared to

2-year commuter colleges. The comprehensive fee in 1986-87 at Knox College will be $11,295.00, a figure which discourages many community college students from applying. Yet seventy-six percent of Knox students receive financial aid. Education at Knox is, in fact, within the reach of community college students, and we hoped that community college administrators would be able to demonstrate this to prospective transfer students.

2) It was observed that special liaison officers from one or the other of the cooperating institutions would benefit students by coordinating orientation, advising, and other support services to students at every stage of their planning for transfer, and especially to continue support services after transfer to smooth the often difficult transition to the four-year school. We still need to do more to make advising effective, whether it takes place at the community colleges or at Knox.

3) The possibility of offering advising personnel from the 4-year school early to potential students, perhaps at community college registration periods, helping potential students plan appropriate coursework, etc.

4) To come to an understanding to make adequate preparation available in reading, writing, and critical reasoning for students intending transfer.

5) To prepare written course recommendations for each curriculum at the senior institution to guide community college student's course choices.

6) More concerted effort in community college recruitment and joint advising (see 2 and 3 above).

7) Special orientation procedures for community college transfer students, including, it was suggested, a short course each summer for community college graduates who would be entering Knox the following Fall.

In February 1986 a transfer articulation agreement with Illinois Central College similar in nature to the prior agreement with Carl Sandburg was unanimously approved by the Knox faculty. It, like the Carl Sandburg articulation agreement, granted junior status to all ICC transfer students holding Associate of Arts degree from ICC.

The direction of further plans and project implementation were at this juncture primary issues. Plans coming out of the conference with ICC and CSC appeared to fall into three broad and distinct categories:

Articulation/Advising: articulation, course equivalency, course planning for two-year students (advising); (all curriculum issues).

Orientation: taking care of adjustment to changing environs from the two-year to the four-year school.

Recruitment: Identification of 2-year college students willing and able to apply to Knox as a transfer student, supplying them with the information that they need, successfully encouraging them to apply and, ultimately, attend.

It is reasonable that each of these areas be considered and addressed one at a time and each with a specific strategy. This thinking has guided our more recent activities.

At this same time it was natural to begin to consider expanding the circle of two-year participants in the pilot program. In February of 1986, contacts were made with Blackhawk East Community College in Kewanee, a relatively small, rural community college located about forty miles to the northeast of Galesburg. Blackhawk had already explored and implemented to varying degrees articulation and transfer equivalency agreements with a number of 4-year institutions (primarily public). The consultations with members of the Blackhawk East staff focused attention on the need to reach articulation agreements as a prelude to further cooperative arrangements with any school and also as a prerequisite to the other issues of orientation and recruitment -- and to make academic advising possible.

Blackhawk East has an ambitious plan to computerize course equivalencies so that each transferable Blackhawk East course would be equated to specific courses at a number of potential transfer institutions. This seemed an admirable, and in some cases even a desirable goal. Nevertheless, one to one equivalency is not nearly as straightforward an issue as first appears. Most of the problems inherent in course by course articulation center on the notion of "equivalence." If equivalence is taken to be too strong a notion, the implication will be that courses are <u>interchangeable</u>. Since the interchangeability of courses is nowhere a fact (including between such quality

institutions as Harvard and Yale), this "strong" a notion of equivalency presented potential dangers, especially for students hoping for degrees in rigorously sequential disciplines in which courses built upon the knowledge of other courses presume specific content.

A weaker notion of equivalence -- that course content overlaps to a greater or lesser extent -- seems considerably more reasonable. Employing "equivalence" in this sense would require a plethora of warnings and caveats to prospective transfer students, but it would also underscore the need for very careful and prescient curricular advising of transfer students early in their community college careers.

It has become increasingly clear that the only reliable method for assuring course evaluation success was to put the determination precisely on the final arbiter, namely, the department at Knox accepting the credit towards the major. Each department is to be asked to evaluate courses applicable to their curriculum and to suggest model junior college programs for students from each community college intending transfer into that specific Knox curriculum. This is a relatively involved process, but it has begun.

Later in February of 1986, a delegation of Knox personnel followed up on a visit the previous Fall to Willliam Rainey Harper College, a large, suburban community college in Palatine, Illinois near Chicago. The first

visit had lead to the establishment of a Knox-Harper Academic Scholarship for Harper transfer students to Knox modeled on the Sandburg-Lombard Scholarship already existing between Knox and Carl Sandburg College.

During this second visit the president of Harper appeared interested in expanding the relationship between Harper and Knox, and in entering into further agreements leading to transfer articulation with Knox. Harper was subsequently invited to participate in the AAC-Mellon grant project along with Carl Sandburg, Illinois Central, and Blackhawk East. Given the many obvious constraints of the pilot grant it was decided to limit participation in the pilot program to these four community colleges.

In March of 1986, talks were held with Illinois Central College which lead to an agreement to offer joint admission to Knox College and ICC's newly implemented QUEST program of accelerated liberal arts. The QUEST program was instituted to enroll 200 students and to develop reading, writing, and critical thinking skills through a concentrated curriculum of liberal arts. Students entering this program are offered special courses designed to prepare them for successful completion of rigorous bachelor degree programs after transfer. The joint admission program with Knox would allow students entering this program to be accepted at Knox from matriculation in the program conditional upon maintaining a minimum grade point average (2.75) and completion of the QUEST program.

In April representatives of all four community colleges were invited to Knox to sit down all together for the first time to plan a conference for fall, 1986 to discuss options and plans already initiated and to bring together faculty members from key departments at each of the institutions so that they might discuss course content, teaching methods, etc., and generally come to an understanding of what is being done by similar departments at each different school.

Such a conference was planned and is scheduled for September 1986.

A Knox transfer brochure to be distributed to guide potential transfer students was discussed and sample copy was put forward. Work on this brochure has since progressed to the proof stage.

A final point of discussion was to consider AAC-Mellon's generous offer to provide a consultant to help focus further activities of the pilot program. A number of desirable qualifications were suggested. We finally decided that the area with which we needed the most help was marketing and recruitment. We plan to request a consultant with expertise in this area.

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
AUG 1 1986
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